

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Once Amended) A method for forming an injection molded sintered compounding gel-free injection molding feed stock for injection molding net-shape ceramic parts, comprising the steps of:
 - a) mixing inorganic particles with non-gel forming water soluble organic binders having molecular weight between 1000 and 1,000,000 to form a mixture and, wherein the inorganic particles that are weigh between 0.5 %weight % and 10% weight of the mixture% based upon the inorganic particles, along with including plasticizers, water and processing aids in a mixer to form a mixture, wherein the non-gel forming water soluble organic binders are composed of high and low molecular weight organic binders, and wherein a weight fraction of the high molecular weight organic binders with respect to the low molecular weight organic binders varies between 0.1 and 0.6;
 - b) compounding the mixed inorganic particles and the non-gel forming water soluble organic binders at a high temperature in the range of between 70° and 98° Centigrade, under shear force, to form a homogenous viscous slurry in the range of 5×10^3 and 7×10^4 Pa.sec at a shear rate of 10 sec^{-1} ;
 - c) cooling the homogenous viscous slurry to room temperature to form a compounded solid mass;
 - d) grinding the compounded solid mass to small pellets to provide feed stock for an injection molding machine;
 - e) injection molding the feedstock to produce a green component part for subsequent drying;
 - f) drying the green part at ambient temperature to form a dried green part; and
 - g) sintering the dried green part to form a net-shape final an injection molded ceramic part.

2. (Original) The method claimed in claim 1, wherein the inorganic particles are Y-TZP ceramic comprising 3 mole % yttria, and have an average particle size ranging from 0.2 to 0.5 μm .

3. (Original) The method claimed in claim 1, wherein the inorganic particles are ceramic composite alumina-toughened zirconia, comprising between 5% to 49% by weight of alumina, and have average particle size ranging from 0.2 to 1.0 μm .

4. (Once Amended) The method claimed in claim 1, wherein the inorganic ~~powder~~ particles comprises between about 45% to 90% by weight of the compounded mixture.

5. (Original) The method claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of mixing and heating the water soluble organic binders, plasticizers and water to a temperature between 90-98°C prior to adding the inorganic particles, and decreasing the temperature to a range of between 70-90°C after adding the inorganic particles and mixing for more than 4 hours in a shear mixer.

6. (Withdrawn) An injection molded net shape product made by the process of claim 1.

7. (Once Amended) An injection molding process, comprising the steps of:

a) mixing ceramic powders with non-gel forming water soluble organic binders having molecular weight between 1000 and 1,000,000 to form a mixture and, wherein the inorganic particles that are weigh between 0.5 ~~%weight %~~ and 10% weight of the mixture% based upon the inorganic particles, ~~along with~~ including plasticizers, water and processing aids in a mixer ~~to form a mixture,~~ wherein the non-gel forming water soluble organic binders are composed of high and low molecular weight organic binders, and wherein a weight fraction of the high molecular weight organic binders with respect to the low molecular weight organic binders varies between 0.1 and 0.6;

b) compounding the mixed ceramic powders at high temperature in the range of between 70° and 98° Centigrade, under shear force, to form a homogenous viscous slurry in the range of 5×10^3 and 7×10^4 Pa.sec at a shear rate of 10 sec^{-1} ;

c) cooling the homogenous viscous slurry to room temperature to form a compounded solid mass;

d) grinding the compounded solid mass to small pellets to provide feed stock for an injection molding machine; and

e) injection molding the feedstock to produce a green part ~~component for subsequent drying~~.

8. (Original) The process claimed in claim 7, wherein the ceramic powders are Y-TZP ceramic comprising 3 mole % yttria, and have an average particle size ranging from 0.2 to 0.5 μm .

9. (Original) The process claimed in claim 7, wherein the ceramic powders are ceramic composite alumina-toughened zirconia, comprising between 5% to 49% by weight of alumina, and have average particle size ranging from 0.2 to 1.0 μm .

10. (Original) The process claimed in claim 7, wherein the ceramic powders comprise between about 45% to 90% by weight of the compounded mixture.

11. (Original) The process claimed in claim 7, further comprising the step of mixing and heating the non-gel forming water soluble organic binders, plasticizers and water to a temperature between 90 and 98°C prior to adding the ceramic powders, and decreasing the temperature to a range of between 70-90°C after adding the ceramic powders and mixing for more than 4 hours in a shear mixer.

12. (Original) The process of claim 7, wherein the non-gel forming water soluble organic binders include primary binders poly(ethylene oxide), polyvinyl-alcohol, polystyrene sulfonate and its derivatives,

hydroxypropyl cellulose, methyl vinyl ether/meleic anhydride copolymer, poly (ethylene glycol) or a mixture thereof.

13. (Original) The process of claim 7, wherein the non-gel forming water soluble organic binders are between 3% and 8% by weight of the ceramic powders.

14. (Original) The process of claim 7, wherein the water in the mixture is between 30% and 50% by weight of the mixture, and preferably between 35% and 45% by weight of the mixture.

15. (Original) The process of claim 7 wherein the homogenous viscous slurry is obtained between 4 and 12 hours.

16. (Original) The method claimed in claim 1, wherein the homogenous viscous slurry is obtained between 4 and 12 hours.

17. (Original) The method claimed in claim 1, wherein the water in the mixture is between 30% and 50% by weight of the mixture, and preferably between 35% and 45% by weight of the mixture.

18. (Original) The method claimed in claim 1, wherein the non-gel forming water soluble organic binders are between 3% and 8% by weight of the inorganic particles.